

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Hurricane Katrina Talking Points
7 September 2005**

The Overall Mission

Working primarily in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Corps of Engineers is carrying out a wide variety of missions in response to Hurricane Katrina. In addition to our efforts to get the water out of New Orleans we are also providing services throughout the affected areas to include provision of ice, water and temporary power; as well as debris removal and temporary roofing.

Our three priorities are:

First, supporting efforts to save lives and find people,

Second, sustaining lives (water and shelter) and

Third, setting conditions for recovery (cleanup, restoring infrastructure and navigation).

Un-Watering New Orleans

We are doing everything we can to get the water out of New Orleans as quickly as possible. We will provide the public with daily updates on our progress. This is a very complex mission, and it will take time.

Estimates about how long it will take to get the water out of New Orleans are very difficult because conditions are changing daily. As more power is restored, more pump stations become operational, and as temporary pumps are placed, we get closer and closer to making New Orleans dry again. As of 1800 hours on 7 September, 23 pumps were working.

Right now our best estimates range from 24 to 80 days for the city, and there is no way to predict timeframes for when specific areas will be dry. We want to be very careful about giving timeframes because we know there are many people wanting to know when they can return to their homes and businesses.

Finding Human Remains

This is a very sensitive issue and we are doing everything we can to treat remains with the utmost dignity and respect. Beyond that, we're not going to discuss this issue because of its sensitive nature.

Water Quality Issues

Everyone is concerned about the quality of water being moved from New Orleans to Lake Ponchartrain, but our first priority is the health and safety of residents of New Orleans and all responders as we get the water out of the city. We are working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to ensure human health and safety as we drain the water and have received approval from EPA to move the water following the agency's normal practices in emergencies. EPA is

monitoring and testing the water. As we drain the water, we anticipate there will be times when we may need to take additional measures, and we are working with EPA on this right now. Any questions as to water quality should be referred to the Office of Water, U.S. EPA.

Hurricane Preparedness

We are continually monitoring the weather and are prepared to respond, if needed, should another hurricane approach the United States. Although we have more than 1,000 people deployed in support of Hurricane Katrina, we are reconstituting our response capability and have many more employees prepared for any other major storms or other natural disasters. We continue to support our military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as supporting the civil works mission at home.

Navigation

The Mississippi River is open to shallow draft traffic and to deep draft vessels to 39-foot draft during daylight only.

Future Funding

The President and Congress are currently considering additional funding to assist in the relief and recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina. At the request of the Administration, the Corps of Engineers is providing input regarding the restoration of flood damage reduction infrastructure as well as the inland and deep draft navigation system.

Debris Removal Mission

To date, USACE has received debris removal missions from FEMA for Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The Mobile District is executing a \$32 million debris removal mission. Memphis District will soon be executing a \$1.5 billion debris removal mission for Louisiana.

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